



## New Jersey Department of Children and Families Policy Manual

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### OVERVIEW: SCREENING AT NEW JERSEY'S STATE CENTRAL REGISTRY

**7-8-2005**

CP&P adopted a statewide centralized screening model on July 1, 2004. Screening is conducted at the State Central Registry (SCR).

Call the statewide "hotline" -- 1-877 NJ ABUSE -- to reach SCR anytime to report suspected child abuse/neglect or to request child welfare services in the State of New Jersey.

NJ SPIRIT -- Reports taken at SCR are recorded in NJ SPIRIT (NJS), an electronic case management system currently under development. Through data entry, NJS begins to build an electronic case record. See details in [CP&P-IX-H-1-100](#).

The CP&P case record continues to be primarily in paper format, however, while NJS is further developed. Screening reports -- completed and stored on-line -- are forwarded from SCR to field offices electronically. At present, field staff document their response in a paper format; ultimately case recording will be completely electronic.

The responsibility for investigating a given report rests with the field office upon receipt of an assignment from SCR.

Contingency Plan -- In case of emergency, power failure at SCR, network malfunction, etc., a system has been developed, to assure continued statewide coverage.

SCR is a unit in the CP&P Office of Program Operations -- The Administrator of SCR reports to the Assistant Director for Case Practice in the Office of Program Operations.

### SCR - PURPOSE AND GOALS

**7-8-2005**

### **Primary goals of the SCR operation include --**

- “Centralized screening” -- 24 hour a day, seven days a week accessibility for reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect in the State of New Jersey, including allegations of institutional abuse/neglect, with calls directed to one, set, “central” location. The SCR hotline operates pursuant to N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.12.
- Statewide consistent, appropriate screening of reports of suspected child abuse or neglect and requests for child welfare assessments and services.
- Statewide collection of “intake” data, to facilitate case tracking and service outcomes.
- The provision of information and referral to services for children and families.
- Assistance with statewide resource development and service planning.

### **SELECT STATUTES RELATED TO REPORTING**

**7-1-2004**

### **STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS TO MAKE REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE**

**7-1-2004**

**N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10 --** The law requires that any person having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse shall report the same immediately to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency.

### **IMMUNITY FROM CIVIL OR CRIMINAL LIABILITY FOR MAKING A REPORT**

**7-1-2004**

**N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.13 --** Any person (including a CP&P employee) who, in good faith, reports child abuse or neglect or testifies in a child abuse hearing resulting from such report, is immune from any civil or criminal liability as a result of such action.

### **PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO REPORT CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT**

**7-1-2004**

**N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.14 --** Any person who fails to report an act of child abuse or neglect, having reasonable cause to believe that an act of child abuse or neglect has been committed, is a disorderly person.

**A disorderly person is --** subject to a fine not to exceed \$1,000.00, or imprisonment which shall not exceed six months, or both. If a complaint should be

filed against someone for failing to report, notify the DAG.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF CLIENT INFORMATION**

**11-22-2004**

**N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10a** -- Starting with the SCR Screener, and continuing throughout the life of the case, CP&P staff, at all levels, keep client information confidential in accordance with this law, the “confidentiality statute.” A client has the right to know that information will be released about him or her only with his or her written consent, unless agency intervention results in a court proceeding. See [CP&P-IX-G-1-100](#) and [CP&P-IX-G-1-200](#).

**HIPAA** -- CP&P handles health information in accordance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines, Federal law.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**9-26-2011**

**Key SCR terms and their working definitions** include:

**“Call Floor”** means:

The SCR hotline operation, where calls are received from the public. The staff of Screeners working the hotline at a given point in time comprise the “call floor.”

**“Call Floor Supervisor”** means:

The SCR Supervisor who is responsible for the immediate supervision of “on duty” Screeners who are “live” on the hotline telephones during an assigned period of time.

**“CAN”** means:

An abbreviation for “child abuse/neglect.”

**“Case”** means:

When CP&P determines that a family needs continued services and supervision during, or as a result of, a child abuse/neglect investigation or a child welfare service assessment, it establishes a “case.”

The decision whether to “open a case for services,” “establish supervision,” or “open a service case” is made within 60 calendar days from the Local Office’s receipt of the CPS report or CWS referral assignment from State Central Registry.

CP&P cases are generally assigned to Permanency Workers, for the provision of case management.

Note: “Case” has a different meaning in NJS: “Case” is used in the NJ SPIRIT User Manual and throughout NJ SPIRIT applications to mean the electronic “basket” which holds information gathered about a given family or household (as is often thought of as a “case record”).

**“Child Protective Investigator”** means:

The Worker from a CP&P Local Office, or an Investigator from the Department of Children and Families Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (DCF IAIU), or the Public Defender Conflict Investigation Unit (PDCIU), who is assigned the task of investigating a report of suspected child abuse/neglect accepted by New Jersey’s State Central Registry.

**“Child Protective Service Report”** means:

A “form,” created by SCR Screeners through NJ SPIRIT, which documents allegations of child abuse or neglect. SCR forwards the Child Protective Service Report to the respective field office for CPS investigation in accordance with policy.

**“Child Welfare Assessment,” “Child Welfare Service,” or “CWS”** mean:

A request for services on behalf of, or the provision of information to express a concern about, a family or household who may need assistance in ensuring the basic health and welfare of a child who resides there, when the person making the inquiry is not alleging that the child is an abused or a neglected child.

A “CWS” is a situation where a potential service need exists for a child or family, but there is insufficient risk to justify a child abuse/neglect investigation.

SCR documents a CWS in the NJ SPIRIT system, with a printable “Intake Summary.”

**“Information and Referral” or “I&R”** mean:

The activity of informing a reporter about services available from public and private sources. Providing I&R is based on a determination of need; knowledge of CP&P, DCF and the community’s resources; and follow-up, where indicated. I&R may be given when the person making the inquiry is not alleging that a child is an abused or a neglected child.

An “I&R” is a situation where SCR or a Local Office

can refer a caller directly to a non-CP&P community provider for needed social services.

SCR documents an Information and Referral Intake in the NJ SPIRIT system, with a printable “Intake Summary.”

- **Open cases** -- SCR forwards the I&R to the assigned Worker/Supervisor, if the I&R concerns a family in open case status or currently under investigation.
- **Other situations** -- For I&Rs associated with families who are not open for services or known to CP&P, the SCR Screener prints out a paper copy of the I&R Intake, and files it at the State Central Registry office.
- **Licensing violations** -- SCR documents calls concerning possible licensing violations as I&Rs, and forwards them to the Department of Children and Families Office of Licensing for follow-up, as appropriate.

**“Information Only”** means:

The provision of information in response to an inquiry, when the person making the inquiry is not alleging that a child is an abused or a neglected child.

**“Initiate an Investigation”** means:

To take action, as necessary, to see an identified child victim of child abuse or neglect within a specified time frame, or, if unable to contact the child in person, to make a good faith attempt to see the child.

**“Intake”** means:

The process of documenting: a report of alleged abuse or neglect of a child (CPS); a request for services on behalf of a child, or a referral of a child for services (CWS); a call in which the caller provides additional or clarifying information about a current service case or active investigation (RI); informing a caller of, or referring a caller to, services available from other private or public sources (I&R); a call that requires no action by CP&P (NAR); or a response to a simple inquiry (IO).

**“Intake Summary”** means:

A “form,” created by SCR Screeners through NJ SPIRIT, which documents a child welfare service (CWS) referral or a request for information and

referral (I&R). When used to document a CWS, the Screener forwards the Intake Summary to the respective field office for a child welfare service assessment in accordance with policy.

**“NJ SPIRIT” (New Jersey Statewide Protective Investigation, Reporting and Information Tool) or “NJS”** mean:

An electronic, web-based case management system used to support CP&P programs, services and operations, including case recording. NJ SPIRIT will automate much of the paperwork and tracking activity that are part of the Division’s child welfare service delivery system. NJ SPIRIT is being built to meet Federal requirements for a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). NJ SPIRIT is being implemented incrementally into CP&P operations.

**NJ SPIRIT screening functions** became effective with the implementation of its initial phase, “Release 1,” starting November 2004.

See details in [CP&P-IX-H-1-100](#).

**“Permanency Worker”** means:

The field staff member from a CP&P Local Office who provides ongoing case management services to a client family in open case status.

**“Production Control Unit” or “PCU”** means:

The information processing unit in the State Central Registry that coordinates and monitors communication between SCR operations and Local Office, DCF Institutional Abuse Investigation Units, and the Public Defender Conflict Investigation Unit field office operations.

**“Referral”** means:

An account or statement describing a request for child welfare services. CP&P documents a CWS in NJS, with a printable “Intake Summary.” The referral may be linked to an existing case, or a new “case record” may be created in NJ SPIRIT.

**“Report”** (used as a noun) means:

An account or statement describing a specific incident (or set of circumstances) of suspected child abuse or neglect.

SCR documents child abuse/neglect allegations in NJS, with a printable “Child Protective Services Report.” The Report may be linked to an existing case, or a new “case record” may be created in NJ SPIRIT.

**“Reporter” means:**

An individual who contacts SCR to make a CPS report, a CWS referral, or a request for social services.

**“Screening” means:**

The process of gathering information about an alleged incident of (or set of circumstances that suggest) child abuse/neglect, risk to a child, and/or a child welfare service need.

Screening is done by a “Screener,” a professional CP&P employee.

**“State Central Registry” or “SCR” means:**

The centralized operation in CP&P responsible for screening incoming calls of suspected child abuse or neglect to the State of New Jersey. SCR operates a 24-hour “hotline,” reached by dialing **1-877-NJ Abuse** (1-877-652-2873) or 1-800-792-8610.

**“Walk-In Reporter” means:**

A member of the public who appears at a Local Office in person, requesting to make a child abuse/neglect report, a CWS referral, or a request for social services.

See definitions of relevant terms in the NJ SPIRIT User Manual and the NJ SPIRIT How-To Guide.

## **SCREENER’S ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**5-28-2013**

**Prompt decision-making to protect children** -- The primary responsibility of an SCR Screener is to decide whether information presented by a reporter meets the criteria for:

- A report of child abuse/neglect
- A referral for child welfare services
- The provision of information and referral
- The provision of information only

**Determine response time** – See [CP&P-II-C-2-300](#), Timeframes for Initial Response.

## SCR Screener

**Supervisory support** -- At all times a Call Floor Supervisor, a shift Supervisor, or, at low-volume times, an on-call Supervisor, is available to SCR Screeners on duty, to give direction, assistance, support, and approval, when necessary.

**Quickly engage each caller.**

**Provide your (the Screener's) full name (first name, last name).**

**Focus and direct information gathering to obtain essential information** necessary to decide:

- Whether a child is unsafe or at substantial risk of harm, and
- Whether the criteria for CP&P services appear to be met.

When taking a report, take action, as needed, to determine the immediate whereabouts of the child victim and family, to facilitate a timely CP&P field response.

Ask each caller whether he or she has any knowledge of domestic violence in the client family/household. If yes, record full details, to facilitate an appropriate response and assessment by assigned field staff, as required. When domestic violence is alleged or suspected, see CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, [Domestic Violence](#), Section B Screening for Domestic Violence at the State Central Registry, for additional policy and procedures.

**To screen effectively, avoid the following --**

- **Credibility of the caller** -- Do not dwell on the credibility of the reporter. The assigned Child Protective Investigator will determine the credibility of the report upon investigation.
- **Intent to harm** -- Whether or not the parent/caregiver intended to hurt the child is not relevant to determining whether to accept a report of child abuse or neglect.
- **Attitude, or possible motivation, of the caller** -- Do not dwell on the "attitude" of the reporter, your personal reaction to the reporter, or the possible motivation of the reporter for calling SCR.
- **One-time incident** -- Do not downgrade a report of child abuse/neglect because the presenting problem appears to be a "one-time incident."
- **Failure to accept services in the past** -- Whether or



not a family or an individual accepted services in the past should not affect whether SCR accepts a new report for CPS investigation.

**Make key decisions independently** -- Each SCR Screener must make the following key decisions independently:

- Determine whether information given meets the criteria for a child abuse/neglect report (CAN), a referral for child welfare services (CWS), Related Information (RI), Information and Referral (I&R), or Information Only (IO).
- If CAN, determine the type (physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse or sexual abuse) and the specific allegation. See [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#).
- Determine whether the CAN report is a CPS Family, CPS IAIU, or CPS Other. See [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#).
- Determine whether to apply a discretionary override, to make a CPS report an “Immediate Response” (see “Determining the Need for an Immediate Response” and “Discretionary Override” in [CP&P-II-C-2-300](#), Timeframes for Initial Response).
- Upon accepting a report, determine which agency to assign the response (a CP&P Local Office, an Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit Regional Office, or the Public Defender Conflict Investigation Unit). Determine which CP&P office to assign, based on whether the report is an Initial, Subsequent, or a Related Information report (see [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#)). For “courtesy” investigations, see [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#).

**Note:** The SCR Administrator may require, at his or her discretion, that supervisory review and approval be obtained before assignments are made to the field. New screening staff are routinely subject to supervisory review and approval before their reports or referrals are assigned for field office response.

**Supervisory approval needed in limited circumstances only** -- Under usual circumstances, approval of, or notification to, the Call Floor Supervisor is required only when you accept certain types of reports or referrals. See When to Consult Call Floor Supervisor, below.

**Casework Supervisor review** -- The SCR Casework Supervisor reviews screening summaries on a weekly basis, making sure: 1) that there is appropriate documentation in **each** screening summary narrative that the Screener asked the reporter whether there is a known history of domestic

violence in each family reported; and, if “yes,” 2) that sufficient details are recorded in the Screener’s narrative account. See CP&P-VIII-B-1-100, [Domestic Violence](#), Section B, Domestic Screening for Domestic Violence at the State Central Registry.

## **QUICK TURN-AROUND EXPECTED**

**7-8-2005**

**One (1) hour to notify, transmit, assign** -- The SCR Screener assigns an accepted CPS report or CWS referral to the field office for response within one (1) hour of answering the reporter’s call to SCR.

**Alert: immediate response** -- The SCR Screener telephones the field office to notify “Intake” that a report or a referral requiring an immediate response is being assigned. The Screener calls the Local Office’s designated contact person/Monitor to give notice.

- The SCR Screener leaves a voice mail message, if unable to make contact.
- The Local Office Liaison, telephone/e-mail account Monitor, or designated staff at the local office calls SCR, if the assignment transmission is unsuccessful/does not arrive within a reasonably short period of time.

**Goal** -- A one (1) hour time limit has been established, to expedite screening and to permit timely field response to reports of suspected child abuse and neglect.

## **ROLE OF THE SCR CALL FLOOR SUPERVISOR**

**1-14-2008**

**Supervisors serve as the Call Floor Supervisor on rotational assigned basis** -- SCR Supervisors are assigned shifts to serve as the Call Floor Supervisor, responsible for:

- Providing overall direction to SCR Screeners working on the hotline.
- Notifying the respective Local Office Manager of a child death or a critical incident that came to the attention of SCR during his or her watch. (The office Manager is responsible for initiating notification, up through the local chain of command.)
- Reviewing any reports or referrals (electronic or paper) that require supervisory approval or handling.
- Handling mail: Determining whether Screener follow up is required to address a correspondence; a report is warranted; etc.

- Ensuring a sufficient number of Screeners are on duty on the “call floor.”
- Monitoring Screener performance.

**Technology allows direct supervisory oversight** -- For training, enhanced staff skill development, call monitoring, and quality assurance purposes, SCR Supervisor work stations are set up to permit direct supervisory oversight to screening staff.

Technology permits the Call Floor Supervisor or Shift Supervisor to listen in on, or to directly participate in, Screener-reporter telephone calls.

The Child Welfare Reform Plan requires CP&P to enact the system in the near future, and develop guidelines for direct supervisory oversight at SCR.

## WHEN TO CONSULT CALL FLOOR SUPERVISOR

1-14-2008

### SCR Screener

**You are responsible for** -- handling calls, screening reports of suspected child abuse/neglect, screening referrals for child welfare service, and initiating reports or referrals to the field for response. An SCR Call Floor Supervisor is available to you at all times, to assist with decision-making, and to give guidance and support, as necessary.

**Consult the Call Floor Supervisor** in the following situations:

- **Whenever deemed necessary, and/or for special projects**, at the discretion of the SCR Administrator.
- **When you are “new” to screening at SCR**, obtain supervisory approval for all reports/referrals before transmitting them to the field for response.

Note: The SCR Administrator, upon consultation with your immediate Supervisor, will determine when this “test” period will end.

- When you believe a **discretionary override is necessary** to code a CPS report an “immediate” response. See “Discretionary Override” in [CP&P-II-C-2-300](#), Timeframes for Initial Response.
- **If you are unsure** how to handle a report and/or whether a report is appropriate for CP&P intervention, seek assistance from the Call Floor Supervisor.
- **To notify of certain types of reports or referrals** -- you must notify the Call Floor Supervisor for any of the

following types of reports/referrals **before** transmitting the report/referral to the field office:

- **Death of child or a near fatality** due to suspected abuse or neglect, regardless of whether there is any prior CP&P history or a currently active case involving the child or family. See [CP&P-VIII-A-1-100](#).
- **Death of child** in active case status, regardless of the cause of death. See [CP&P-VIII-A-1-100](#).
- **A critical incident**. See [CP&P-IX-D-1-100](#).
- **A non-child related critical incident**. See [CP&P-IX-D-1-100](#).
- **A CPS report of any unusual or serious medical condition** (example: Munchausen by Proxy allegation).
- **A courtesy investigation/assessment**, when required to expedite a response.

If an immediate response is required, SCR assigns the report to the Local Office in whose jurisdiction the child victim is physically located at the time SCR receives the report. Field offices coordinate and negotiate investigation efforts. The Office of Supervision takes the lead. See [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#).

- **Media involvement** or potential media interest (e.g., a report in which local or national media have, or are likely to, become interested because of the nature of the report).
- **Reports relating to DCF-operated facilities**.
- **CP&P employee-involved reports** or other conflict of interest reports/allegations. See [CP&P-II-C-1-300](#).
- **CPS IAIU reports**. See [CP&P-II-A-2-200](#) for required notification protocol.

**Prior to requesting Call Floor Supervisor approval**, be sure to complete all required on-line data searches and applicable forms. See Searching NJS, and Other Data Bases, below.

**In crisis or emergency situations**, see the Call Floor Supervisor immediately.

**“Safe Haven Hotline” answered by Call Floor Supervisor**  
-- Incoming calls to the “Safe Haven Hotline” ring directly at the Call Floor Supervisor’s work station.

The Call Floor Supervisor personally handles the call, as appropriate, to assure prompt handling in strict compliance with established CP&P policy and procedures. See policy at [CP&P-IV-C-5-100](#).

When there is no Supervisor on site, an SCR Screener answers the Safe Haven Hotline and handles the call, in accordance with policy.

## **GENERAL DUTIES OF THE PRODUCTION CONTROL UNIT**

**7-8-2005**

### **General duties of the SCR PCU include --**

- Establish and maintain paper and electronic files on all reports and referrals handled by SCR screening operations.
- Provide daily e-mail to each Local Office and IAIU Office at the end of each work day, listing the CPS reports assigned to that office during that particular work day.
- Provide daily notice to each Local Office and IAIU Office, before the start of each work day, listing after hour assignments to SPRU, 24-hour assignments not assigned to SPRU, CWS referrals taken, and other after-hour activity for that given office.
- Process incoming mail to, and outgoing mail from, SCR.
- Establish and maintain all SCR “business” processes.
- Maintain SCR office supplies and equipment (copiers, fax machines, telephone equipment, etc.).
- Maintain the on-line Resource Guide for Screeners.
- Update lists of home telephone numbers/ways to contact field, Senior and Executive Staff throughout CP&P and DCF, for use when contact becomes necessary, particularly after hours.

## **USE NJS TO DOCUMENT INTAKES AT SCR**

**5-10-2010**

### **SCR Screener**

**Required: Document each call taken at SCR in NJ SPIRIT.** Gather, record, and document essential information in NJS at the Intake Window, to produce a printable DCF Form [1-1](#), the Screening Summary.

**Documentation for domestic violence screening is required on every call.** Document that you asked the reporter if he or she has any knowledge of domestic violence in the client family/household. If the reporter gives an affirmative response, document full details in the Screening Summary narrative. See [CP&P-VIII-B-1-100](#), Domestic Violence.

## **DOCUMENT EACH CALL IN NJS**

**3-20-2006**

**Document data for analysis.** Each call to the “hotline” is documented in NJS to enhance accountability and to permit data analysis, to best serve the staffing, training, and other allocation needs of SCR, CP&P, DCF, and DHS in serving the children and families of New Jersey.

### **SCR Screener**

**Complete NJS applications in the Intake Window**, as applicable, to produce a printable DCF Form [1-1](#), Screening Summary, to document EACH call you handle while working on the SCR call floor.

## **ENTER CWS RESPONSE TIMES IN NARRATIVE TEXT**

**3-20-2006**

**NJS design to be updated.** NJ SPIRIT was programmed to capture “immediate” or “24-hour” field response times only. The NJS application is being updated, as necessary, to permit documentation and processing of CWS response times as well.

### **SCR Screener**

- Determine the appropriate response time for the CWS referral within 72 hours or within five (5) work days.
- Enter “within 24 hours” in the “response time” box in the intake application, a required field.
- Make entries in the “Stated /” field, to override the 24-hour response time to either a 72-hour or a five (5) work day response time, in accordance with screening policy for CWS, [CP&P-II-A-3-300](#).

An indication of the correct CWS response time, as determined by you at screening, will appear as a narrative statement within the “Stated Problem/Request” text box in the printable DCF Form [1-1](#), the Screening Summary,

completed for CWS.

## **NOTIFICATIONS TO FIELD OFFICES**

**11-22-2004**

**Daily notification by 4 p.m.** Daily, at approximately 4 p.m. each work day, SCR PCU e-mails each CP&P Local Office and each IAIU office a list of reports that were assigned to that given office/operation that particular day.

## **REGISTERING “UNKNOWN” REPORTS**

**11-22-2004**

**When a family is “unknown,” SCR assigns correct names entered locally in NJS.** When SCR assigns a report/referral to a field office in which all family/household members are “unknown,” the field office assumes responsibility for entering names into NJS, once learned.

When identifying information is ultimately entered, the information will be corrected automatically in NJS through the “reverse bridge” between the two systems.

Note: The SCR Screener searches additional on-line data bases up-front when attempting to identify an “unknown” family, searching by address, etc. See Conducting the Review of CP&P Records, below.

**PCU monitors, to assure registration.** PCU follows up with the Local Office, as necessary, in an effort to identify the “unknown” family, to assure the report is registered in NJS.

## **UPDATING CLIENT IDENTIFYING INFORMATION IN NJS**

**7-26-2010**

See [CP&P-III-C-6-100](#).

## **SEARCHING IN NJS, AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DATA BASES**

**11-22-2004**

**Required search --** The SCR Screener consults NJS, the system record and other available computerized data bases during case screening.

**NJS stores history --** When new data is inserted into NJS - say, a new address is entered for a family - NJS warehouses all previously entered data - the prior address continues to be accessible through NJ SPIRIT, available through search efforts.

## **PURPOSE OF ON-LINE RECORD REVIEW**

**11-22-2004**

**Why search --** Search electronic data bases to determine whether any of the persons named in a report or a referral (i.e., “participants”) are known to the Division or to another specified agency or entity, and, if they are, what the specific reasons were/are for their involvement.

**Is family known to CP&P?** -- The data “look-ups” determine whether an individual adult, a child being “reported or referred,” or the reporter himself or herself, has previously been served by CP&P, is the subject of a currently active investigation assessment, or is a participant in an active case.

**Search on, even after making a “match”** -- Even when making a name “match,” continue to check each member of the family/household. Persons may be known to more than one case; stopping a search prematurely could result in important facts being missed.

In stepparent, or second marriage/civil union partnership situations, the SCR Screener obtains prior legal names, to permit a thorough, accurate name check.

A full record review provides an historical overview of both general and protective service information, and allows SCR to:

- Detect patterns of allegations/incidents of child abuse/neglect.
- Detect patterns of allegations/incidents of institutional abuse/neglect.
- Determine service need.
- Assess effectiveness of services.
- Identify relatives and other possible resources.
- Identify persons alleged/found to have abused or neglected the subject child or any other child.
- Determine how long ago incidents occurred.
- Link a current piece of work to an existing CP&P record.

## CONDUCTING THE REVIEW OF CP&P RECORDS

6-15-2011

### SCR Screener

**Required electronic data look-ups** -- You are required to check the following when completing **all Intakes** (see definition of “Intake” at Definitions, above) at the initial screening of each call:

- **NJ SPIRIT system.** Search broad; use details to narrow down your inquiry. **Search by:**
  - Person -- Search each individual participant
  - Case



- Address (the system will only make a “hit” on an exact match)
- CP&P Worker

**Try these search methods:**

- “Exact” search
- “Sounds like” search
- “Wildcard” search

Note: For names with common nick names -- example, Bob for Robert, Betty for Elizabeth -- search under each name individually in NJS.

**Consult NJS User Manual** for details and other search tips.

- **ALFA-X (FIND):** to determine whether a person is known either to CP&P or the county welfare board. ALFA-X is an alphabetical listing of all CP&PCWA cases and their respective case numbers.
- **MEDA Screen, MEDI Screen:** to determine whether a family is known to NJ Medicaid or TANF; if so, to obtain or verify an address, identifying information, etc.
- Consult the Call Floor Supervisor for additional leads in attempting to identify a family.

In addition, upon SCR transmitting a report of suspected child abuse/neglect or a referral for child welfare assessment/services to a Local Office for investigation/intervention/follow-up, as appropriate, the assigned Worker, assisted by the Supervisor or clerical support, as appropriate, checks the following:

- **Case records (closed, open):**
  - For cases in open status, contact the assigned Worker or Supervisor, if possible. Discuss the case history, including the results of prior CPS investigations. Review the case record.
  - For closed cases: obtain the recently closed case record from the Local Office file room; otherwise, request the case record from closed files. Review the case record, upon receipt.
- **Case records (inactive):**
  - Request in NJS that an inactive case be re-activated (to permit on-line access to older case histories). The case will be available to view the next day.

## SCR Screener

**Consult Promis/Gavel** to determine whether an individual has a criminal history in the following situations:

- **“Paramour cases”** -- When accepting a child abuse/neglect case in which the alleged perpetrator is a parent’s paramour, or the parent/caregiver is currently involved with a significant other/paramour, you must check the paramour’s name against Promis/Gavel files.
- **After-hours placements with relatives** -- When SPRU seeks to place a child with a relative or a family friend, you may be called on to consult Promis/Gavel, to determine whether the relative/family friend, or any other adult residing in the household, has a criminal history.

## SEEK OUT-OF-STATE RECORDS

7-1-2004

## Assigned Responding Child Protective Investigator

**Obtain out-of-state CAN history** -- If a reporter indicates that the family or the perpetrator recently lived in another state, or a US political jurisdiction (i.e., Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, Guam, or the District of Columbia), contact the child protective services agency in that jurisdiction, to obtain any information that the agency may have about the family or perpetrator.

## ASSIGNING THE REPORT NAME

11-22-2004

**If known, use that name** -- If a report concerns a child/family previously known to CP&P, use that pre-existing “case” name.

**Otherwise, use mother’s FULL name to “name” a report of suspected child abuse/neglect** -- CP&P names reports as follows:

- Use the mother’s full name (last name, first name, up to 13 characters) as the report name
- In the absence of a mother, use the father’s full name (last name, first name, up to 13 characters) as the report name
- In the absence of both a mother and a father, use the oldest minor child’s full name (last name, first name, up to 13 characters) as the report name.

## SCR Screener

**After completing the on-line record search, assign a**

**report name** -- to identify the report for automated and manual record keeping:

- Do not use hyphens when naming a case.
- Use “unknown” if no family/household members can be identified.
  - If the reporter does not provide any names, the assigned field Worker will need to assign the report name in NJS upon gathering family identifying information.
  - See Registering “Unknown” Reports, above.

## **FIELD OFFICE INTERFACE WITH SCR**

**11-22-2004**

**Telephone prompt at CP&P offices: “Call SCR to report child abuse/neglect”** -- An automated telephone message advises callers to CP&P Local Offices to call the NJ State Central Registry, 1-877 NJ ABUSE, to report suspected incidents of child abuse or neglect.

### **Field Staff**

**Direct telephone number for your use** -- A dedicated telephone number is available for you to contact SCR for administrative, case practice, notifications, and other internal purposes. Do not use the “hotline” telephone number to call SCR; instead use the internal number.

**To learn the Field Support Number** -- consult your local SCR Liaison. Keep the telephone number confidential, for strict use by CP&P staff only. The number rings at PCU, and is forwarded within SCR operations, as appropriate.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF LIAISON AND OFFICE MANAGER**

**11-22-2004**

**Locally determined protocol** -- Management of each, individual CP&P field office determines how their local office operation will interface with SCR. Local management determine who, specifically, will “monitor” the incoming SCR telephone and e-mail accounts, who will serve as the office’s SCR Liaison, etc.

**Each Local Office names a Liaison to SCR** -- Each CP&P Local Office Manager, DCF IAIU Regional Office, and the Public Defender Conflict Investigation Unit (PDCIU) is responsible for naming a staff member to serve as its Liaison to SCR.

**Coverage must be provided at all times** -- Each field office must develop a system to assure back-up

coverage when the Liaison is absent or unavailable.

## **Local Office Liaison to SCR**

### **You are responsible for assuring --**

- **Telephone Account** -- Designated staff monitor the office's designated telephone line, for notification calls from SCR to alert the office of incoming "immediate response" assignments.

Note: When the Monitor is away from the telephone, an alternate must check the voice mail for incoming messages from SCR. Check the voice mail at least once every 15 minutes throughout the work day.

- **E-Mail Account** -- Designated staff monitor the local incoming e-mail account for CPS reports and CWS referrals from SCR.

Note: The Monitor is responsible for checking the e-mail for incoming reports and referrals from SCR at least once every 15 minutes throughout the work day. An alternate must be available whenever the Monitor is off duty.

- Timely assignment of CPS reports for investigation and CWS referrals for assessment.
- Addressing your office's screening, coding, and case practice concerns with SCR Supervisors and Managers.

## **Local Office Manager**

**Make system for walk-in reporters** -- Develop, implement, and monitor a system for handling walk-in reporters to your office, including:

- Assure the reporter speaks with an SCR Screener by telephone, when seeking to report a child abuse/neglect incident.
  - Directly handle requests for Child Welfare Services, I&R and IO at the local office, or help the walk-in to contact SCR to initiate a referral, when appropriate. See Walk-in Reports at Field Offices, below.
  - When your office screens a CWS or an I&R, assure your staff member who handles the interaction completes an Intake Summary (using a paper format, completing it manually), enters the names of the assigned Worker and Supervisor, and faxes a copy to SCR's Production Control Unit for data entry, to register the referral in NJS.
- Note: SCR is the only office/operation within CP&P that is

programmed to enter data into NJ SPIRIT at present.  
(Field offices are programmed for “read only.”)

**Make system for integrating court orders** -- Develop, implement and monitor a system for handling court ordered reports/referrals to the local office. See Court Orders, below.

## **FIELD OFFICE UPGRADE CWS REFERRAL FROM SCR**

**7-8-2005**

**Field office staff can question “CWS” designation** -- If a field office questions whether a CWS referral from SCR screening should be upgraded to a report of suspected child abuse/neglect, the field office Liaison (or designated staff member) must call SCR, and consult the Call Floor Supervisor. The Liaison and Call Floor Supervisor discuss the matter, consult their respective supervisors, if necessary, and resolve any conflicts.

If SCR and field office staff decide that the CWS referral (documented on an Intake Summary application) should be upgraded to a child abuse/neglect report (which would necessitate creating a Child Protective Service Report), the SCR Screener who took the original call, if available/on duty, proceeds as follows:

- Create a Child Protective Service Report computer application
  - Complete CPS text boxes, as applicable
  - Enter a statement in the narrative to explain that the call was upgraded from a CWS to a CPS
- Link the new Child Protective Service Report to the “case” (which was created in SPIRIT upon accepting the CWS)
- Complete the report, accept the report, and assign the report back to the sending field office

The Local Office assigns the Child Protective Service Report back to the Supervisor who was assigned the original CWS.

### **Assigned Child Protective Investigator**

**Handle the Child Protective Service Report and Intake Summary as one “investigation.”**

## **WALK-IN REPORTERS AT FIELD OFFICES**

**7-8-2005**

**Field Office Liaison to SCR (or other professional staff member, as Designated by the Local Office Manager)**

### **Meet with the walk-in reporter in person**

- **CAN directly to SCR** -- If a reporter is posing allegations of suspected child abuse/neglect, he or she must speak directly to an SCR Screener. You need not take the referral information. (Note: The following protocol applies, regardless of whether the family is currently under investigation by CP&P, an active case, a closed case, or new to the agency):
  - **Direct the walk-in reporter** to a telephone.
  - **Help the walk-in reporter call SCR**, and speak directly to an SCR Screener about his or her CPS concerns.
  - **As a last resort only, take the report information**, if the reporter refuses to speak to an SCR Screener. You must then call SCR yourself and speak to a Screener, to make a report of child abuse/neglect.
- **CWS referrals or I&R screened and handled locally or directed to SCR** -- If the walk-in seeks to apply for services, or express concerns about a child or family that meet CWS criteria, your Local Office handles the matter directly, or assists the walk-in to contact SCR.

If handled directly by the Local Office, proceed as follows:

- Provide information and referral, when appropriate, in accordance with [CP&P-II-C-2-435](#); consult the local Resource Development Specialist, if necessary
- Document the referral information on an Intake Summary (using a paper format, completing it manually)
- Ask the walk-in if he or she has any knowledge of domestic violence in the client family/household. If the reporter gives an affirmative response, document full details. (Make certain that the presenting problem does NOT require CPS case handling rather than CWSI&R case handling.)
- Conduct required searches and record checks, see Conducting the Review of CP&P Records, above.
- Determine who will handle the referral in accordance with local office intake protocol, and then, once determined, enter the names of the

assigned Child Welfare Worker and Supervisor on the Intake Summary in the spaces provided

- Fax a copy of the Intake Summary to SCR's Production Control Unit for data entry, to register the referral in NJS. Note: SCR is the only office/operation within CP&P that is programmed to enter data into NJ SPIRIT at present. (Field offices are programmed for "read only.")

- **Assigned staff handle CWS on open case or under investigation** -- If the reporter is requesting child welfare services on a case in open status or on behalf of a family under current investigation --

- Immediately contact the assigned Worker, or his or her Supervisor
- Staff directly assigned to a report or an active case are responsible for meeting with the walk-in, documenting the request for services, and providing follow-up, as appropriate

See also Screening by Field Staff, below.

## COURT ORDERS

11-22-2004

**When CP&P is ordered by the court to take action --**

- **For a child abuse/neglect allegation from court --**

The Local Office Liaison to SCR, the local office Court Liaison, or other professional staff designated by the Local Office Manager calls SCR and gives the report information to an SCR Screener.

- **Fax a copy of the court order to SCR**, in support of the telephone contact.

The SCR Screener completes search activities and data look-ups in accordance with Searching in NJ Spirit, and Other Electronic Data Bases, above, creates a Child Protective Services Report, and processes the report in accordance with this policy.

- **For a child welfare service court order --**

The local Court Liaison or other professional staff designated by the Local Office Manager writes up an Intake Summary (using a paper format, completing it manually), assures a data look-up is completed in accordance with Use NJS to Document Intakes at SCR, above, and:

- Refers the Intake Summary to the assigned

Supervisor, if the family is currently under investigation by CP&P, or the case is in open case status, or

- Defers the Intake Summary to the local “intake” operation for assignment, if the family has no prior CP&P history, or the case is to be reopened, and
- Faxes a copy of the Intake Summary (paper version) to the SCR PCU to register the referral in NJS. Note: SCR is the only office/operation within CP&P that is programmed to enter data into NJ SPIRIT at present. (Field offices are programmed for “read only.”)

**Note:** The Court Liaison refers court orders to Youth Case Management at the Children’s System of Care (CSOC) for follow up and service provision by that agency, rather than CP&P, when appropriate.

## **SCREENING BY FIELD STAFF**

**7-8-2005**

### **CP&P Field Staff**

**You may have child abuse/neglect concerns** -- While conducting business on behalf of CP&P, you may encounter situations, be advised of, or derive information which may constitute the basis for CP&P child protective service intervention on behalf of a child.

Upon such occasions, direct a professional or other individual who has firsthand information about the child and family to immediately contact SCR to initiate a report of suspected child abuse/neglect. Provide the telephone number to call (**1-877-NJ ABUSE**).

#### **If you question whether the person will call SCR --**

- Gather essential information relevant to the situation at hand (such as family member and alleged perpetrator identifying information, present whereabouts of the child victim, allegations or concerns, identity of a primary source of information, when available).
- Advise the individual to call SCR.
- Contact SCR yourself (to ensure that the individual made the report):
  - Immediately, when the situation is of an urgent or crisis nature; or
  - Within one hour, to report other situations.
- Advise the SCR Screener that an individual may call



the hotline to make the report (thus reducing the possibility of duplicate recording by SCR staff).

**In a high risk or crisis situation** in which you are “on the scene,” first ensure that all children present are safe, then see that an appropriate report is made to SCR.

Immediately consult your Supervisor from the field:

- Determine whether you, or another Worker, will be assigned to investigate the incident, assure the child’s safety, and stabilize the immediate crisis. Wait with the child until assigned CP&P staff, SPRU, the police or other help/protection arrives.
- Determine whether you, or your Supervisor, will call in the report to SCR.

Always remember to notify SCR if you are alerted to a new CAN incident on a case active in your caseload.

**CWS to CPS on active case/current assignment** -- Take action, as necessary, to assure the child is safe at present before a CPS Investigator is assigned/responds. Direct any questions or concerns to your Supervisor’s immediate attention.

## **COLLATERAL CONTACTS**

**11-22-2004**

**SCR staff do not make collateral calls** -- Due to the nature and pacing of statewide centralized screening, SCR Screeners and Supervisors do not make collateral calls to verify information provided by reporters.

**Collateral calling reserved for assigned field office** -- Contacting collateral sources of information - local law enforcement, a child’s school or child care center, a doctor or other health care provider, a counselor, therapist, etc. - is part of the CPS investigation or child welfare service assessment. See [CP&P-II-C-2-200](#). Such activity is conducted by the assigned, responding Local Office, IAIU or Public Defender Conflict Investigation Unit staff.

Note: If the reporter identifies a potential collateral contact, the SCR Screener records this information in NJS (to be reflected in the Child Protective Service Report or Intake Summary), for follow up by the assigned field Worker.